

*A life with dyslexia
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In support of house bill 6517*

My mother told me, as a toddler she thought I was going to do so well in school because at a young age I loved picture books. Well it didn't happen. Going to school everyday knowing when I stand up and read out loud everyone in the class including the teacher will laugh at me and at the questions I ask. Everyone including my family saw me as stupid. I was small as a child but I would not take the insults, not from the kids anyway. I got in fights and beat up almost daily. I always thought out of the box and that was not cool in the 60's. In 6th grade; the class was talking about history. The question was, where did lamp oil in the Middle East come from. I looked at the map and knew they didn't drill at the time so I raised my hand and after much moving and shaking the reluctant teacher called on me. My answer was perfect, whales. Everyone including the teacher laughed at me. To this day if

I see someone from that class, the first thing they would say is whale oil? They have recently found evidence of whaling in the Mediterranean. By High School I grew bigger and angrier. I did not have as many fights but still many more than most kids. I don't know when I give up and excepted I was stupid but I did, for that is what everyone around me told me I was. The school system passed me along and I got out of high school at 18. I would hope after 50 years our school system would learn to teach children with dyslexia. Why has it not?

What do I do with my life at 18 years old? School was not an option so I went into the Marine Corps, I was good at fighting. One day in basic training changed my life. I was told to go to a meeting there were maybe ten others from our group of 500 recruits. A man in dress blue uniform started with talking about how we are over achievers and top grade earners in high school. They want to send us to prep school to make us ready for Annapolis. I looked around and was thinking to myself (what the ____ am I doing here). Turns out I have a very high IQ. I could not take their offer since they were talking about four hours of reading a night and I think all of you can translate that for a dyslexic. From that day on I have done my best to make it in a literate world being near illertate.

After the service I got a job as many in my Bridgeport family have done in a factory. After a while I decided this was not for me and enrolled at Housatonic Community College. I looked into the engineering program but with working and the time I would

need to do all the math pointed me to the arts. I wound up getting a BA in graphic design and photography.

I was a product photographer for 12 years until the digital camera killed the business. I went back to school for computer graphics and I always blow the young kids minds with what I can do visually. But employers in the art world only want youth; I managed to get into high end Photoshop work. Then the print industry took a nosedive and I had to reinvent myself again. I went back into carpentry at 42. I had done some while working through school. Over the next 12 years I worked my way up to being the lead of crews installing high end finish work in over the top houses. This work let me be very creative. But it was always as a subcontractor. 10 years ago I finally got a full time job in the trade show industry as a carpenter. My boss knew of my graphics background and 9 years ago I was made graphic manager.

There are so many jobs I cannot do but I have always found work. Many people when they hear all the different things I can do call me a Renaissance man. I tell them, if only I didn't miss the 15th century it would be great. I truly feel the most for the people out there that are as dyslexic as I but are of average IQ. If that was I, I would be homeless, God bless them.

Now at 63 years old Covid came and deastates the trade show industry, I am currently on furlough thinking I well be going back to carpentry work.

A big thing has happened to me this past year regarding my dyslexia. I was gifted a course to help my reading, spelling and writing. I was reading at a 4th grade level in 2019 today I read at a 12th grade level. Thanks to the NOW program I can read a book a week easily with good retention. 168 classes 5 days a week for 50 minutes.

There is no reason for dyslexics today to be illiterate in a literate world. Studies tell us 50% of the prison population is dyslexic. I would think teaching dyslexics to read would be money well spent. Many of us do have much to contribute to society if given a chance. I also think that not long ago, before literacy was widespread, we were the town tinkers, the people who solved the daily problems.

In closing: From here looking back the worst part of all this for me was possibly being the most intelligent kid in school but seen and treated as the least, thankfully I made it.

Glen P. Kapostas